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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000285

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#) [KDP](#)

SUBJECT: (U) KURDS ANTICIPATE AGAIN FIELDING SECOND-LARGEST BLOC IN
NEXT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: KIRKUK 280

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard K. Bell, Regional Coordinator, Exec,
Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Khalilzad met December 2-3 with KRG Regional President Masud Barzani and then with Iraqi President Talabani. The KDP is trying to woo Faily Kurds to drop their support for their own lists or the Shia Islamist lists and support the Kurdish Alliance slate instead. Barzani and Talabani predicted the following totals in the National Assembly: about 100-115 seats for the Shia alliance; 50-60 for the Kurdish Alliance as the second largest bloc; 30-35 (Talabani says) or 40-45 (Barzani says) for the Sunnis; 25-30 for Allawi; 1-5 for Chalabi; 2-4 for the Kurdistan Islamic Union. The PUK is asking for quiet U.S. intervention in the KDP-PUK talks on unifying the KRG governments. (END SUMMARY.)

(U) Barzani

2. (C) Barzani told Amb. Khalilzad that the KDP election preparations were well underway in the KRG. The KDP was trying to woo Faily Kurds (who, in contrast to most Iraqi Kurds, are Shia and are concentrated in Baghdad and eastern Iraq) away from Iranian influence; 160 had come to Erbil for a pre-election conference, Barzani aide Fuad Hussein told us. Commenting on the campaign itself, Barzani said Allawi had the best advertisements, but many voters were confused by the abundance of competing lists and messages.

3. (C) Barzani predicted the following totals in the National Assembly:

- about 100 seats for the Shia alliance;
- about 55-60 seats for the Kurdish Alliance (KDP-PUK list);
- 40-45 seats for the Sunnis;
- 30 seats at most for Allawi (Barzani commented that, if he could give more seats to Allawi, he would);
- Chalabi 1-2 seats; and
- Jaburi 1-2 seats near Hawijah.

Barzani said that, with this result, he could support Allawi for Prime Minister. The Ambassador urged Barzani to help move the government formation process forward quickly after the election.

4. (C) Barzani said Mosul looked very good for the Kurdish Alliance, but had "not yet reached fever pitch." The Kurds hoped to win 6-8 of Ninawa's 19 seats. He said 40 percent of Ninawa's population was Kurdish and another 10 percent non-Arab.

(Comment: we expect Ninawa to be one of the most hotly contested election races, with the Sunni Arab Consensus List (List 618), Allawi's National List (List 731) and the Kurdish Alliance (List 730) all looking to pick up seats there. End Comment.)

(U) Talabani

6. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad stressed the importance of letting people vote their conscience free of intimidation. Talabani told the Ambassador that the election campaign was going well, though debates needed to be more frequent. Talabani hoped for a larger turnout than in January or October. He and PUK Deputy GenSec Noshirwan Mustafa had been meeting with PUK members to explain the election's importance and to push them to turn out the vote. Talabani conceded that, while he saw campaign enthusiasm in Kirkuk, there was less in the KRG. He thought Kurdish Alliance preparations were better in rural areas, such as Dahuk, Diyala and Kirkuk, than in heavily urban areas like Baghdad.

7. (C) Talabani predicted the following totals in the National Assembly:

- 100-115 seats for the Shia Coalition (List 555), though he said some people predicted only 90-110;
- 50-60 seats for the Kurdish Alliance (List 730), which would be the second largest bloc;
- 30-35 seats for the Islamic Alliance Tawafaq (List 618), making it the third largest bloc. (Talabani thought 618's leaders were wrong to expect not less than 40 seats.)

-- 25-30 seats for Allawi's list 731 that was expecting 70; and
-- 4 for Chalabi's National Conference slate (List 569), who
Talabani claimed was "dreaming" to think he would get 15 seats.

18. (C) Joining the Talabani meeting was Iraq's Ambassador to Britain, Dr. Salah Al-Shaikhly, who expected Allawi to win 40 seats. Talabani responded that Allawi's focussed appeal to Sunni votes had angered Shiite voters; he pointed to Allawi's ties to the Baath and statements about violations of Sunni Arab prisoners' rights. Al-Shaikhly agreed Chalabi would win 3-5 seats, perhaps in Qadaniya and Thawra. He expected Saleh Mutlaq's National Dialog Front (List 667) to win 5-10 seats. Talabani anticipated that with the second-largest bloc of votes, the Kurds would be the kingmakers in the formation of the new, permanent government.

19. (C) Talabani explained that the Kurdistan Islamic Union (List 561) had separated from the Kurdish Alliance because it wanted 6 seats on the list but the Alliance only would give it 12. He predicted the KIU would win 2 seats in Sulaymaniyah and none in Erbil or Dahuk. Talabani, appearing nonchalant about the KIU's running against the Kurdish Alliance, predicted that after the elections the KIU planned to ally with the Alliance in the next national assembly. Talabani described the KIU as part of the international Muslim Brotherhood movement. (Comment: By contrast, Noshirwan Mustafa told the Acting Regional Coordinator November 30 that he thought the KIU would win 4 seats on its own (reftel). End Comment.)

(U) KRG Unification

110. (C) Talabani said he had proposed to the KDP that it could keep the KRG premiership for one year and two months, then the PUK would get it for a year. The KDP had originally said yes, but now proposed 2 years first to the KDP and then 2 years to the PUK. Noshiwan Mustafa said the PUK would not accept the KDP's having both the KRG Presidency and premiership; this was why the PUK wanted frequent rotation. The KDP also wanted both the premiership and interior ministry. (Comment: In the fall, REO Kirkuk's interlocutors had suggested unification could come before December 15, but now estimates trail off to after the elections. End Comment.) Mustafa and Talabani asked for U.S. help in the negotiation. Talabani said it would be to the Kurds' electoral advantage to announce a KDP-PUK agreement before elections.

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